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Boustán and Reed: pp. 159-172

Contextualizing Heaven in Third-Century North Africa

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In the earliest stages of the movement of Jesus followers, heaven was no issue. They looked out for his speedy return and were in no need of a detailed description of the “life everlasting.”¹ It can therefore hardly be chance that the most important texts in the Gospels about the afterlife, the story about Dives and Lazarus as well as Jesus’ words on the cross to the criminal (“Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise”) both occur only in Luke, the youngest Gospel.² And indeed, towards the end of the first century the situation had changed. It had become clear that Jesus would not return within his followers’ lifetime, yet the persecutions required an elaboration of the afterlife in order to sustain those Christians who were prepared to die for their faith. Given the absence of any authoritative description, it is surprising how early the main features of heaven became accepted in the Christian tradition.³ Nevertheless, this absence of an authoritative tradition also gave scope for individual appropriations of the standard views. We should never forget that precisely in this area there always was room for more idiosyncratic ideas, since the more interesting visions of heaven invariably also contain a personal touch.

In my contribution I would like to present a commentary on one of these more personal pictures of heaven: a vision of a North African martyr in the middle of the third century. Such visions illustrate the ways in which individual Christians had accepted and modified more traditional ideas. At first sight, a thematic discussion might perhaps better fulfil this volume’s goals, but a more comprehensive survey of North African ideas of heaven is possible only after a detailed analysis of all available evidence, and we have not yet reached that stage. Christian North Africa was unusually interested in visions compared to other areas of the Roman Empire and, as a first step towards a thematic discussion, I will naturally also adduce parallels from other visions in order to show that the idea of heaven in this particular vision sometimes followed traditional views.⁴ Subsequently we will look at our source, the Passio Sanctorum Mariani et Iacobi (hence:

Marian: § 1), the court scene in the vision (§ 2), its landscape (§ 3), its fountain (§ 4) and its vision of heaven in general (§ 5).

1. The Passio Sanctorum Mariani et Iacobi

Our source derives from the description of the martyrdom of a group of North-African Christians, who were arrested near Cirta in Numidia during the Valerian persecution.⁵ They were executed in the spring of 259, a few weeks before Montanus, Lucius and others at Carthage, but after the martyrdom of Cyprian in the autumn of 258 (§ 2).⁶ The description itself dates from the early fourth century, but it has used an earlier eyewitness report.⁷ The final editor had read the Passion of Perpetua, as a number of verbal echoes demonstrate, and was fully in command of Roman stylistic devices such as “chiastical parallelism, symmetry, alliteration and homoioteleuton”.⁸ In short, he clearly possessed some literary training. The Passio contains several visions of which we will discuss here the one by the lector Marian, one of the protagonists of the martyrdom, as it is the most informative one about heaven.

After Marian had been subjected to a gruelling torture, he had the following vision:

I was shown, brothers, the towering front of a shining, high tribunal (tribunal), on which, instead of the governor, a judge of a very handsome countenance presided. There was a scaffold (catasta) there, whose lofty platform was reached not merely by one but by many steps and was a great height to climb. And up to it were brought ranks of confessors, group by group, whom the judge ordered to be executed by the sword. It also came to my turn. Then I heard a loud, clear voice of somebody saying; “Bring up Marian!” And when I climbed up to that scaffold, look, all of a sudden Cyprian appeared, sitting at the right hand of that judge, and he stretched out his hand and lifted me up to a higher spot on the scaffold. And he smiled at me and said: “Come, sit with me”.

And so it happened that the other groups were interrogated, while I too was an assessor of the judge. And the judge rose, and we escorted him to his residence (praetorium). Our road lay through a place with lovely meadows, clad with the joyous foliage of flourishing woods, shaded by

tall cypresses and pine trees that beat against the heavens, so that you would think that that spot all round was crowned with flourishing groves. In the centre was a hollow of a crystal spring that abounded with fertilizing watercourses and pure water.

And lo! all of a sudden that judge vanished from our sight. Then Cyprian picked up a cup (fiala), that lay at the edge of the spring, and when he had filled it from the spring like a thirsty person, he drank. And filling it again he handed it to me, and I drank gladly. And when I said “Thank God,” I woke (he said) by the sound of my own voice (Marian 6).

2. The court scene

At first sight, it seems that the vision starts with a normal court scene. This should not be surprising. At the moment of his vision Marian had already been tortured and he was now waiting for his interrogation by the judge. In the Roman legal system, the pro-consul held judicial assizes in the main provincial cities.⁹ During the actual interrogation, the judge and his assessors were sitting on a semi-circular tribunal, the tribunal or b°oî.¹⁰ In front of him there was a platform (catasta or ambon, somewhat confusingly sometimes also translated with b°oî), on which suspects were interrogated and tortured; apparently, this platform often had only one step, but could also be higher.¹¹ However, the future martyr does not see the normal court arrangement, such as it must have been familiar to him from experience of hearsay. On the contrary. Marian sees an extremely high tribunal that was also white; moreover, he did not see the normal Roman governor but an extremely handsome judge. As white was typical of angels and other people in heaven in early Christianity,¹² the colour suggests a heavenly tribunal and that is, presumably, also suggested by its impressive height and the handsome judge.¹³ In other words, we already are in heaven, although we are not told how Marian ascended.

Marian was not the only martyr who dreamt of a court tribunal. In his Life of Cyprian, Pontius relates that on the day on which Cyprian’s exile started the Carthaginian bishop had the following vision:

There appeared to me (he said), when I was not yet enveloped in the quiet of sleep, a youth taller than man’s measure. When this person led me, as it

were, to the residence, I seemed to be conducted toward the tribunal of the proconsul who was sitting there. As he looked at me, the latter immediately began to note on his tablet a sentence which I did not know, for he asked me nothing in the usual manner of interrogation. Indeed, however, (another) young man who was standing behind him read the notation with great curiosity. And because he could not express it in words, he showed by an explanatory nod what were the contents of the writing on that tablet. With his open hand as flat as a blade he imitated the stroke of the customary punishment, thus expressing as clearly as by speech what he wanted understood [...].¹⁴

For our purpose it is sufficient to note that Cyprian also dreamt of being led to a tribunal. We know that he was immensely influential among African Christians, as also appears from his presence in Marian and Montanus,¹⁵ where he is even consulted as the most important expert regarding the question whether the final death-blow would be painful. Although both future martyrs would have been naturally preoccupied by their impending court case, a certain influence of the dream of Cyprian on Marian can hardly be excluded, given the bishop's great prestige in North-Africa.

In his dream, Marian conflates both an earthly and a heavenly court scene. The earlier aspect is reflected in Marian's vision of many groups of confessores being brought up who the judge condemns to the sword, as is the case with Cyprian. Confessores were those Christians who had confessed the name of Christ and thus were likely to become martyrs. Cyprian often mentions this confession in his contemporaneous letters.¹⁶ To pronounce the verdict of capital punishment was the prerogative of the Roman governor,¹⁷ and death by the sword was the most merciful death;¹⁸ other ways of execution—for example, death through a bear—were dreaded by future martyrs.¹⁹

However, at this point the scene abruptly shifts away from the normal proceedings during a court case on earth. Marian hears a voice commanding him to appear before the judge. When he starts to climb the steps of the scaffold, he suddenly sees Cyprian appearing at the right hand of the judge,²⁰ one of the testimonies to the enormous respect the bishop enjoyed (above). Cyprian lifts up Marian to the higher spot and smiles at him. We find such smiles also elsewhere in early Christian literature. When in the Acts of Paul

(7) the apostle Paul is in prison, there appears a young man (above) of great beauty (like the judge in Marian's vision) who smiles and loosens his bonds, and in the Acts of Peter (16) Jesus appears smiling to Peter in prison. The motif clearly derives from pagan epiphanies where the appearing deity traditionally smiles to reassure anxious mortals.²¹ His words "Come, sit with me" meant that Marian would immediately ascend to heaven and sit on the judgment tribunal at Christ's right hand. It was indeed a widely shared idea among early Christians that after their execution martyrs would ascend straight to heaven, where they became assessors of Christ;²² this idea of an immediate ascent would exert a long lasting influence and was even taken over by the Jews during the times of the crusades.²³ Although this small sentence might seem natural to us, it perhaps also betrayed a world of frustration, since on earth Cyprian would normally have sit with presbyters only: minor clergy, such as Marian who was a lector, had always to remain standing in deference in his presence.²⁴

3. The heavenly landscape

After the completion of the trial, Cyprian and Marian escorted the judge to his residence (praetorium):²⁵

Our road went through a place with lovely meadows, clad with the joyous foliage of burgeoning groves, shaded by cypresses rising up high and pine trees that beat against the heaven, so that you might think that that spot in its entire circumference was crowned with fertile woods. A hollow in the centre abounded in fertilising watercourses and pure water from a clear spring (6.12-3).

The journey confirms our impression that in this vision Marian is already in heaven and therefore no longer needs to cross a difficult terrain. Whereas Perpetua (Perpetua 10.3), Hermas (Vis. 1.1.3) and the girls in Methodius of Olympus' Symposium (5: § 4) have to pass through a rough countryside before they reach their proper goal, Marian's journey is smooth and easy. The landscape shows certain elements of a locus amoenus but, unlike Saturus in the Passion of Perpetua (below), Marian does not enter into much detail and mentions only a few characteristics.²⁶

The element of height occurs in other pictures of lovely gardens, such as in that of

Alcinoos in the Odyssey (7.114) and in that encountered by Socrates and Phaedrus in Plato's Phaedrus (230B). It even occurs in the much later, late fourth-century Visio Pauli (24), where Paul sees arbores magnas et altas valde before entering Paradise. Height suggests the shade that is so desirable in the Mediterranean. Pines can grow to eighty feet and were common shade trees in Greece and Italy. They are mentioned in idyllic landscapes, and Ovid fondly remembered (one would nearly be attempted to say "pines for") the pines of his gardens during his exile in far-away Pontus.²⁷ The presence of cypresses is more problematic. It fits the context that it was considered one of the tallest trees,²⁸ but it also had a strong funerary connotation. "Its branches were placed at the door of the mourning house, on the funerary altar and the pyre itself."²⁹ Yet the context does not evoke associations with death, and here the cypress must have been chosen rather for its shade evoking qualities. The author may well have had in mind its place in contemporary parks and gardens of the local grandees, such as can still be seen on North-African mosaics of the time.³⁰

The cypress is also evoked in another North African vision. In the Passion of Perpetua the spiritual guide of Perpetua, Saturus, relates how, after his death, he was carried by four angels beyond the present world to an intense light. Here:

there appeared to us a great open space, which looked like a kind of park (viridiarium), with roses as tall as trees and all kinds of flowers. The trees were as tall as cypresses and their petals were constantly falling. (11.5-6)

Apparently, Saturus also thinks of the local parks (viriditaria), and his mention of roses evokes spring, as the rose was the spring-flower par excellence in antiquity.³¹ And indeed, in Roman times eternal spring had become a recurrent feature of the Golden Age and the locus amoenus.³² It is not surprising that it thus was incorporated into descriptions of heaven too.³³ A garden-like picture of the hereafter is also alluded to by the Carthaginian Tertullian,³⁴ and he and Saturus may well have been influenced by the Apocalypse of Peter (ca. 135 C.E.), where God

showed us a great open garden. (It was) full of fair trees and blessed fruits, full of fragrance of perfume. Its fragrance was beautiful and that fragrance reached to us. And of it...I saw many fruits.³⁵

Yet the closest parallel to Marian's vision can be found in a sermon, formerly believed to

have been by Cyprian, which probably dates to the first years of the 250s and may well have originated in Carthage itself. After a graphic picture of the torments that await the unrighteous, the author continues with the pleasures of paradise:

where in the verdant fields the luxuriant earth clothes itself with tender grass, and is pastured with the scent of flowers; where the groves are carried up to the lofty hill-top, and where the tree clothes with a thicker foliage whatever spot the canopy, expanded by its curving branches, may have shaded. There is no excess of cold or of heat, nor is it necessary that in autumn the fields should rest, or, again in the young spring, that the fruitful earth should bring forth her bounty. All things are of one season: fruits are borne of a continued summer, since there neither does the moon serve the purpose of her months, nor does the sun run his course along the moments of the hours, nor does the banishment of the light make way for night. A joyous repose possesses the people, a calm home shelters them, where a gushing fountain in the midst issues from the bosom of a broken hollow, and flows in sinuous mazes by a course deepsounding, at intervals to be divided among the sources of rivers springing from it.³⁶

There are a number of verbal echoes of this sermon in Marian's description of the heavenly paradise,³⁷ and it seems virtually certain that our author knew this sermon – not surprisingly, if it was indeed written in Carthage. The passage elaborates on the Arcadian aspect in comparison to Marian's vision, but it also points to another aspect which is not uncommon in descriptions of idyllic places: instead of an eternal spring, the seasons have now disappeared altogether. We find the same abolishment of the seasons in the description of the fate of the just by the Second Sibylline Oracle (327), which in this respect may eventually go back to the Greek Utopian tradition. In a description of life in the reign of Kronos, Plato (Politikos 272A) already mentions that the seasons had been tempered so as to cause primeval man no grief, and in the Utopian picture of Horace's Epode 16 (56), Jupiter is said to be “moderating each of the two (extremes of climate: utrumque rege temperante caelitem)”.

In this heavenly paradise there is no more night or day, but light forever. The eternal light may well derive from Revelation (21.23, 22.5), where it is said that there

will be no more sun or moon, since the splendour of the Lord will give light. In turn, Revelation may have been influenced by the prophecy in Zechariah (14:6-7) that “it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light.” Before entering heaven, Saturus also saw an intense light (Perpetua 11.4), and many passages show that light was indeed the characteristic of heaven for the early Christians.³⁸

4. The fountain and the cup

The final part of this description is a fountain, and this aspect brings us back to Marian’s vision, where he saw a crystal spring with fertilizing watercourses and pure water. The detail is not elaborated upon and hard to explain from his vision only. Fortunately the picture in pseudo-Cyprian helps us on our way. Here the spring is the source of rivers, and such a spring we also find elsewhere. In an imitation of Plato’s Symposium, a Christian author of the later third century, perhaps Bishop Methodius of Lycian Olympus, lets a number of virgins discuss themes of Christian theology in the Garden of Virtue. Its description contains several themes that have now become familiar to us, such as light, fragrance, trees and shade:

The spot was extraordinarily beautiful and full of a profound peace. The atmosphere that enveloped us was diffused with shafts of pure light in a gentle and regular pattern; and in the very centre was a spring from which there bubbled up, as gently as though it were oil, the most delicious water; and the crystal-clear water formed into little rivulets. These, overflowing their banks, as rivers do, watered the ground all about with their abundant streams. And there were various kinds of trees there, laden with mellow, ripe fruit hanging gaily from their branches—a picture of beauty. The ever-blossoming meadows, too, were dotted with all kinds of sweet-scented flowers, and from them there was wafted a gentle breeze laden with perfume. Now a stately chaste-tree (vitex agnus castus) grew nearby; here under its far-spreading canopy we rested in the shade.³⁹

The description clearly alludes to the beginning of Plato’s Phaedrus, but instead of

settling beneath a plane tree – an influential motif in ancient literature – the virgins settled under an agnus castus, a tree symbolic of chastity.⁴⁰ For our subject it is important to note that here too we find a spring in the very middle of a landscape that is explicitly called a “new Eden.” In other words, the spring in Marian’s vision is clearly the spring in Paradise from which the four great rivers (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates; Gen 2:10-14) originated.⁴¹ The similarities between the Carthaginian and Lycian descriptions of the spring suggest an earlier source, which unfortunately has to remain obscure. The spring is not yet mentioned in Genesis, and the “source and the river flowing from it” in the garden of Eden mentioned by the early Jewish Apocalypse of Abraham (21.6) can hardly have been at the base of the later descriptions. The same is true of the already mentioned Apocalypse of Paul, where the apostle sees “a tree planted from whose roots water flowed out, and from this was the beginning of the four rivers” (45).⁴² It is not impossible, then, that the spring in Marian’s vision is the product of a Christian development.⁴³

After Cyprian and Marian had arrived at the spring, the judge suddenly vanished from our sight.

Then Cyprian picked up a cup (fiala), that lay at the edge of the spring, and when he had filled it from the spring like a thirsty person, he drank. And filling it again he handed it to me, and I drank gladly. And when I said “Thank God,” I woke (he said) by the sound of my own voice.

Unlike Perpetua, who explains her visions several times in the Passion of Perpetua (4.10, 7.9, 8.4, 10.14), Marian does not interpret his own vision, but his editor continues with: “Then James also recalled that a manifestation of the divine favour had hinted this crown would be his” (7.1). In other words, using the immensely popular metaphor from athletics, the editor suggests that Marian would become a martyr. But how did he arrive at this interpretation? We may perhaps find some kind of an answer if we take a closer look at the two other visions in which a fiala occurs.

When in a vision Perpetua had seen her deceased brother Dinocrates in a sorry state, she prayed intensely for him and after a few days she had another vision:

I saw that place that I had seen before and Dinocrates with a clean body, well dressed and healthy. And where the wound was, I saw a scar; and the basin

that I had seen before now had its rim lowered to the level of the boy's waist. And water incessantly flowed from it. And above the rim there was a golden cup (fiala) full of water. And Dinocrates drew close and drank from it, yet that dish did not run short. And when he was satisfied he began to play with the water, as children do, full of happiness. And I woke up. Then I realized that he was liberated from his penalty (Perpetua 8).

Rather remarkably, the fiala also returns in Montanus, where a mother, Quartillosia, whose husband and son had just been martyred and who herself also soon would be a martyr, saw in a vision her martyred son coming to prison. "He sat down at the rim of the water-trough and said: "God has seen your pain and tribulation". And after him there entered a young man of remarkable size who carried two cups (fialas) full with milk in his hands." The young man gave everybody to drink from these cups, but they were never empty. Hereafter, the window of the prison suddenly became bright and heaven became visible. Then the young man put down his two cups and said: "Look, you are satisfied and there is more: still a third cup will be left over for you." And then he left (8).

Although the two later visions have clearly have been influenced by Perpetua's vision, they have appropriated her visions each in their own way.⁴⁴ Yet they can perhaps help us to find a meaning in this at first sight rather enigmatic symbol. In Montanus, the young man (an angel?) hands out cups with milk. Now the newly initiated faithful received milk and honey after baptism,⁴⁵ which was then immediately followed by the Eucharist.⁴⁶ A connection of milk with the Eucharist is supported by the fact that on the day after the vision the future martyrs received alimentum indeficiens instead of their daily ration of food from two fellow Christians velut per duas fialas (9.2), a clear reference to the two cups in Quartillosia's vision. The young man's promise that there is still a third cup left seems to point to the impending martyrdom of Quartillosia.

In the case of Marian's vision the connection is much less clear. The text interprets the vision itself as a revelation by divina dignatio in order to confirm his hope of salvation (ad fiduciam spei salutaris: 6.5) and Marian's vision is immediately followed by a report of a vision of James which is also interpreted as a manifestation of the divina dignatio that the martyr's crown would be his (7.1). In other words, the context suggests a link between the cup and martyrdom.⁴⁷ Now in a discussion of the penitent, Cyprian

retorically asks: “How can we make them fit for the cup of martyrdom (ad martyrii poculum), if we do not first allow them the right of communion and admit them to drink, in the Church, the cup of the Lord?”⁴⁸ Our fiala, then, is clearly a representation of this “cup of martyrdom” and by gladly drinking from it Marian accepts his forthcoming martyrdom.

There is a striking difference, though, between the vision of Perpetua and that of Marian. In Perpetua’s vision her brother takes the cup himself, but in Marian’s vision Marian receives the cup from Cyprian. Perpetua seems to have been a highly self-confident young woman, who felt assured enough to ask a vision from God (Perpetua 4.1-2); consequently, she imagined her brother as taking the cup by himself. Marian, however, occupied only a low position in the Christian clergy, and he could only imagine receiving the cup from his revered bishop.

After he had drunk from the cup, Marian said Deo gratias. The words may seem normal to us, but they will have been more significant to contemporaneous African readers. When a group of martyrs from Scillium was condemned to death by the proconsul Saturninus,⁴⁹ they answered Deo gratias; the same words were pronounced by Cyprian and the young recruit Maximilian.⁵⁰ Apparently, this was the standard African Christian reaction on the pronouncement of their death sentence. And it is by the sound of these, so fateful words that Marian is woken up. Similarly, Perpetua woke up from her first vision after those present in heaven had said: “Amen!” (4.9).

5. Marian’s heaven

Having come to the end of our discussion of Marian’s vision of heaven, what can we conclude? Firstly, it is clear that heaven is above us. Marian has to ascend a high tribunal, just as in the Passion of Perpetua Perpetua has to climb a high ladder (4.3); similarly, her teacher Saturus relates that after his death he was carried by angels as if they were climbing a gentle hill (11.3).⁵¹ Although Marian’s vision does not stress the vertical symbolism to the same extent as happened in Perpetua’s vision, where she had to climb a dangerous ladder,⁵² it clearly situates heaven above us.

Secondly, there is a close connection between heaven and martyrdom in our texts. Perpetua, Saturus and Marian all dream that they ascend straight to heaven after their

martyrdom. This was indeed a widespread belief among the early Christians, which must have sustained them during their arrests and executions.⁵³

Thirdly, in his *Peregrinus* (13) the pagan satirist Lucian had already noted that Christians had persuaded themselves that they were immortal and would live forever. It is therefore not surprising that they must have been curious as to what heaven looked like. We know about this curiosity from a intriguing passage in *Montanus* (7.3-5). Here a presbyter, Victor, relates that in a vision he saw a youth (*puer*), “whose face shone with an indescribable brilliance,” entering his prison.⁵⁴ Victor realised that he was the *Dominum de paradiso* and, rather surprisingly, asked Him where heaven was. When He answered: “It is outside this world,” Victor said: “Show it to me.” But the youth refused to do so and replied: “And where would your faith be?” Thus, if a presbyter could already be curious, how much more the average Christian?

Fourthly, heaven in Marian’s vision is depicted as a garden but not in great detail. Both aspects deserve some comments. From the description in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (§3), it is clear that already at an early stage the Christians had adopted the identification of heaven with Paradise. The garden is still virtually absent in New Testament eschatology, but it is important in Jewish eschatology, as the projection in the *Endzeit* of the *Urzeit* Garden of Eden.⁵⁵ Descriptions of this garden are elaborated with details from the traditional *locus amoenus* and contemporary parks (§3). Yet Marian presents less details than some of the other descriptions quoted. It is not impossible that in his case we find an influence of Cyprian, who was rather reticent about the content of fate after death:⁵⁶ this reticence seems reflected in the scarcity of details about heaven in both *Marian* and *Montanus*.

Finally, I have called my contribution “contextualising heaven” not without a reason. Whether we believe or not, we all carry with us certain stereotyped images of heaven. Yet we should always remember that these images are the fruit of a two millennia long tradition. In the first centuries of the new faith, the Christian faithful could still contribute to that tradition. Marian’s vision shows that his picture of heaven was already influenced by the intertestamentary tradition of Paradise in heaven, but also by his knowledge (experience?) of the legal procedure during the interrogations of Christians, his impending martyrdom and his admiration of Cyprian. His idiosyncratic vision demonstrates that traditions always have to be appropriated, and this process is

conditioned by the context in which we find ourselves: be it on earth or, as in Marian's case, in heaven.

¹ My investigation builds upon and sometimes makes use of my earlier investigations into early Christian afterlife: Bremmer, The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 56-70; “Perpetua and Her Diary: Authenticity, Family and Visions,” in Märtyrer und Märtyrerakten (ed., W. Ameling; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002), 77-120 and “The Vision of Saturus in the Passio Perpetuae,” in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome. Studies in Ancient Intercultural Exchanges in Honour of A. Hilhorst (ed., F. García Martínez and G.P. Luttikhuisen, Leiden: Brill, 2003).

² For the origin of the term “Paradise” see most recently A. Hultgård, “Das Paradies: vom Park des Perserkönigs zum Ort der Seligen” in La cité de dieu = Die Stadt Gottes (ed., M. Hengel et al; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 1-43; Bremmer, Rise and Fall, 109-19 (text), 178-84 (notes).

³ For these ideas see most recently A. Lumpe and H. Bietenhard, “Himmel,” RAC 15 (1991), 173-212; J. B. Russell, A History of Heaven: The singing silence (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); J. E. Wright, The Early History of Heaven (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); B. Lang and C. McDannell, Heaven. A History (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001²).

⁴ For an enumeration of the African visions see G.W. Clarke, The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage I (New York and Ramsey: Newman, 1984), 150 and The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage III (New York and Ramsey: Newman, 1984), 218. I have presented a detailed analysis of the visions in the Passio Perpetuae (hence: Perpetua) in my “Perpetua and Her Diary”, 95-119 and “The Vision of Saturus”.

⁵ I use the text and translation (albeit adapted) of H. Musurillo, The Acts of the Christian Martyrs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 194-213, which is based on P. Franchi de’ Cavalieri, La Passio SS. Mariani et Iacobi (Rome: Tipografia Vaticana, 1900), 42-63. For a French translation, introduction and some notes see V. Saxer, Saints anciens d’Afrique du Nord (Vatican City: Tipografia poliglotta Vaticana, 1979), 88-103 For the date see the excellent discussion by A. R. Birley, “A Persecuting Praeses of Numidia under Valerian,” J. Theol. Stud. NS 42 (1991): 598-610 at 603. For the “genre” of the Acta martyrum and the problem of their trustworthiness and authenticity see Bremmer, “Perpetua and Her Diary,” 78-80.

⁶ For the Passio Montani et Lucii (hence: Montanus) see the most recent edition by F. Dolbeau, “La Passion des saints Lucius et Montanus,” R. Et. Aug. 29 (1983): 39-82; see also R. Herzog and P.L. Schmidt, eds., Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike IV (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997), 429-30 (by A. Wlosok, with the most recent bibliography).

⁷ Herzog and Schmidt, Handbuch IV, 427-9 (by A. Wlosok, with the most recent bibliography).

⁸ See Franchi de’ Cavalieri, Passio SS. Mariani, 13 note 1; J. Aronen, “Marianus’ Vision in the Acts of Marianus and Iacobus,” Wiener Studien 97 (1984): 189-86 at 172-3 (quote).

⁹ For the Roman system see Chr. Habicht, “New evidence on the province of Asia,” JRS 65 (1975): 64-91; G.P. Burton, “Proconsuls, assizes and the administration of justice under the empire,” JRS 65 (1975): 92-106; J. den Boeft and J.N. Bremmer, “Notiunculase Martyrologicae III,” Vigiliae Christianae 39 (1985): 110-30 at 119.

¹⁰ Acta Pauli et Theclae 16; H. Gabelmann, Antike Audienz- und Tribunalszenen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 172-4; L. Robert, Le martyre de Pionios, prêtre de Smyrne (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994), 107f.

¹¹ Perpetua 6.2; Acta Phileae (Latin) 1; Martyrium Theodoti 6; Eusebius, HE 8.9.5; P. Franchi de’ Cavalieri, Scritti agiografici, 2 vols (Rome, 1962), I.57, 94, 231.

¹² For many examples see U. Körtner and M. Leutzsch, Papiasfragmente. Hirt des Hermas (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), 386 note 71 and 480 note 202.

¹³ Christ is regularly pictured as a “handsome youth” in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, cf. E. Peterson, Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis (Rome: Herder, 1959), 191f.

- ¹⁴ Pontius, *Vita Cypriani* 12.3-5 Bastiaensen, tr. R. J. Deferrari, *Early Christian Biographies* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1952), 17 (slightly adapted). For the dream see especially J. Amat, *Songes et visions. L'au-delà dans la littérature latine tardive* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1985), 131-8.
- ¹⁵ *Marian* 6.9, 14 and *Montanus* 11.2, 13.1, 21.3.
- ¹⁶ Cyprian, *Ep.* 5.1.2, 6.1.1, 21.1.1 and *passim*.
- ¹⁷ Cf. J. Ermann, "*Ius gladii* – Gedanken zu seiner rechtshistorischen Entwicklung," *ZRGG* (Rom. Abt.) 118 (2001): 365-77.
- ¹⁸ B. de Gaiffier, *Recherches d'hagiographie latine* (Brussels: Soc. des Bollandistes, 1971), 70-76.
- ¹⁹ *Perpetua* 19.4: Saturus dreads a bear and hopes to be killed by one bite of a leopard.
- ²⁰ This was the normal place of honour, see the many parallels in Körtner and Leutzsch, *Papiasfragmente. Hirt des Hermas*, 407-8 (by Leutzsch).
- ²¹ Note also *Acts of John* 73. For many parallels see O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder* (Giessen: Topelmann, 1909), 3 note 2; M. Puelma, *Mus. Helv.* 17 (1960): 149.
- ²² *Hermas*, *Vis.* 3.1.9 (martyrs at God's right hand); Tertullian, *Ad martyras* 2.4; Hippolytus, *Commentary on Daniel* 2.37.4; Cyprian, *Ep.* 6.2.1, 12.2.1, 15.3, 31.3, *Ad Fort.* 13; Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.42.5; K. Berger, *Die Auferstehung des Propheten und die Erhöhung des Menschensohnes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976), 374 note 489; Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 101f.
- ²³ S. Shepkaru, "To Die for God: Martyrs' Heaven in Hebrew and Latin Crusade Narratives," *Speculum* 77 (2002): 311-41.
- ²⁴ Cf. Cyprian, *Ep.* 1.1.1, 39.5.2, 40.1.2, 45.2, 59.19.1; *Gesta apud Zenophilum*, CSEL 26.186-7 (standing); Clarke, *Letters* I, 150.
- ²⁵ For the development in meaning of *praetorium* see R. Egger, "Das Praetorium als Amtssitz römischer Spitzenfunktionäre," *Sitzungsber. Österr. Ak. Wiss.* 250 (1966): 3-47; A. Martin, "Praetoria as Provincial Governor's Palaces," in *Historia testis. Mélanges T. Zawadzki* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1989), 229-40.
- ²⁶ G. Schönbeck, *Der Locus Amoenus von Homer bis Horaz* (Diss. Heidelberg, 1962); J. Ntedika, *L'évocation de l'au-delà dans la prière pour les morts* (Louvain and Paris: Nauwelaerts, 1971); Amat, *Songes et visions*, 117-20; P. Hass, *Der locus amoenus in der antiken Literatur* (Bamberg: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1998).
- ²⁷ Theocritus 1.1-2; Ovid, *Ars* 3.692, *Pont.* 1.8.43-4; R. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace, Odes Book II* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 58f.
- ²⁸ Servius on Vergil, *Ecl.* 1.25: *cupressus vero arbor est maxima*. Note the combination of the pine and the cypress in Horace, *C.* 4.6.10.
- ²⁹ Nisbet and Hubbard, *Commentary on Horace, Odes Book II*, 236.
- ³⁰ M. Blanchard-Lemée et al., *Mosaics of Roman Africa*, tr. K.D. Whitehead (London: British Museum Press, 1996), 167-77; M. Guggisberg, "Vom Paradeisos zum "Paradies". Jagdmosaiken und Gartenperistyle in der römischen Herrschaftsarchitektur Nordafrikas und Siziliens," *Hefte Arch. Sem. Univ. Berns* 17 (2000): 21-39.
- ³¹ Theophrastus, *Hist. Plant.* 6.8.2; Cicero, *Verr.* 5.27; Columella 12.28.3. Note also the combination of spring and roses in a vision related by the late seventh-century Valerius of Bierzo, *Dicta ad beatum Donadeum*, cf. M. Diaz y Diaz, *Visiones del Más Allá en Galicia durante la Alta Edad Media* (Santiago de Compostela: Bibliófilos Gallegos, 1985), 45-7.
- ³² Vergil, *G.* 2.149-50; Ovid, *Met.* 1.107 with F. Bömer *ad loc.*, *F.* 5.207-8; Lucian, *VH* 2.12; Claudian, *Epithal.* 55.
- ³³ Cyprian, *Carm.* 6.227.
- ³⁴ Tertullian, *Ad nationes* 1.19.6, *Apologeticum* 27.14, 47.13, *De oratione* 3.3.
- ³⁵ For an introduction and the translation see W. Schneemelcher (ed), *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. and tr. R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols (Cambridge: J. Clarke & Co., 1992²), II.620-38. Our quote

derives from c. 16 of the Ethiopic translation, which is the most complete text we have.

³⁶ Pseudo-Cyprian, *De laude martyrii* 21, translated (slightly adapted) by R.E. Wallis, *The Writings of Cyprian II = Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, vol. 13 (Edinburgh, 1894), 245-46, cf. Amat, *Songes et visions*, 155-6. For date and place see the concise discussion by J. Doignon in Herzog and Schmidt, *Handbuch* IV, 578.

³⁷ Aronen, "Marianus' Vision," 180f.

³⁸ Bremmer, *Rise and Fall*, 60.

³⁹ Methodius, *Symposium*, Prelude 7-8, tr. H. Musurillo, *St. Methodius, The Symposium. A Treatise on Chastity* (Westminster and London: Newman, 1958), 40-1. For the Greek text and the author see H. Musurillo and V.-H. Debidour, *Méthode d'Olympe, Le Banquet* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1963).

⁴⁰ Plane tree: Plato, *Phaedrus* 229A; Cicero, *De oratore* 1.29; Apuleius, *Met.* 1.18; Achilles Tatius 1.2.3; Marcellinus, *Life of Thucydides* 25. *Agnus castus*: see the brilliant study by H. von Staden, "Spiderwoman and the Chaste Tree: the Semantics of Matter," *Configurations* 1 (1992): 23-56.

⁴¹ For the rivers see most recently E. Noort, "Gan-Eden in the Context of the Mythology of the Hebrew Bible," in *Paradise Interpreted* (ed., G.P. Luttikhuisen; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 21-36 at 27-34.

⁴² For a discussion of the passage see A. Hilhorst, "A Visit to Paradise: Apocalypse of Paul 45 and Its Background," in Luttikhuisen, *Paradise Interpreted*, 128-39.

⁴³ For a representation of this source on a Tunisian vessel see A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), fig. 39.

⁴⁴ See the subtle analysis by V. Lomanto, "Rapporto fra la 'Passio Perpetuae' e 'Passiones' africane," in *Forma futuri*, 566-86, who at 581-85 discusses the parallels between *Perpetua* and *Marian*.

⁴⁵ Tertullian, *De corona* 3.3, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.14.3, *Scorpiace* 1.12; Hippolytus, *Traditio apostolica* 21; still useful, H. Usener, *Kleine Schriften* IV (Leipzig and Berlin: B.G. Teubner, 1910), 398-417 ("Milch und Honig").

⁴⁶ Tertullian, *De idololatria* 7: *manus admove re corpori Domini*; Cyprian, *Ep.* 58.9.2, *De lapsis* 15; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses mystagogicae* 5.21; Chrysostomus, *Hom.* 47 (PG 63, 898); Franchi, *Scritti agiografici* I, 236 note 3.

⁴⁷ See also Mark 10:38-9.

⁴⁸ Cyprian, *Ep.* 57.2.2; the expression *poculum martyrii* also occurs in *Ep.* 37.2.2. Elsewhere he speaks of *poculum salutare* (*Ep.* 28.1.2) and *calix salutis* (*Ep.* 76.4.2); see also *Martyrium Polycarpi* 14.2; Tertullian, *Scorpiace* 12; Origen, *Exhortatio ad martyrium* 28; Franchi, *Scritti agiografici* II, 244 note 1.

⁴⁹ For the proconsul see now J. Nollé on *I. Side* 57.

⁵⁰ *Passio Sanctorum Scillitanorum* 15, 17; *Acta Cypriani* 3².6 Bastiaensen; *Acta Maximiliani* 3.2; Franchi, *Scritti agiografici* II, 243-5.

⁵¹ L. Beirnaert, "Le symbolisme ascensionnel dans la liturgie et la mystique chrétiennes," *Eranos Jahrb.* 19 (1950): 41-63; see now especially Fritz Graf's contribution to this volume.

⁵² For the ladder, see Bremmer, "Perpetua and Her Diary," 98-100.

⁵³ C. Hill, *Regnum caelorum. Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001²), 203-6; Bremmer, *Rise and Fall*, 58f.

⁵⁴ Christ often appears as a young man in the somewhat earlier apocryphal *Acts of the Apostles*, cf. Peterson, *Frühkirche*, 191-93.

⁵⁵ See now the various studies in Luttikhuisen, *Paradise Interpreted*; J.P. Brown, *Israel und Hellas III* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2001), 138-40.

⁵⁶ Amat, *Songes et visions*, 153f.